



# Bat Facts!

A handy guide to one of the night's most misunderstood little creatures

Bats thrive in every continent except for Antarctica, with over 1,200 species worldwide!

There are 16 different species of bats in Tennessee alone, with the Little Brown Bat being the most common.

The Little Brown Bat can live to be over 20 years, one of the longest living mammals of its size!

If you weigh 120 pounds and eat 60 pounds of food each day, you just might be a bat. Bats often eat 50% of their body weight in bugs each night; that adds up to over 3,000 insects!



The flying squirrel should really just be called the gliding squirrel; bats are the only true flying mammals.

It's a good thing that the screeches bats make are out of our hearing range; the sound can get up to 120 decibels, the equivalent of having a smoke detector a couple inches from your ear!

"Blind as a bat" is a bit of a misnomer; in fact, most bats are able to see as well as humans!

If you see bats flying around your home at night, don't fret! All Tennessee bats feed exclusively on insects like mosquitoes, making them one of the most beneficial creatures of the night.

Unfortunately, with their habitats shrinking due to disease and human activity, Tennessee bats are running out of places to live. Keep on reading to find out how you can help our furry little friends!

Bats are masters at echolocation, which works a lot like sonar. By emitting ultrasonic calls as they fly and listening to the echoes, bats are able to build a sonic map of their surroundings. Their ability is so acute that they can avoid obstacles no wider than a piece of thread in complete darkness!



## Tennessee Bats Are In Danger

White-nose syndrome, A disease marked by a white fungus that grows on the nose, ears and wings of affected bats, has taken a massive toll on Tennessee bat populations.



The fungus, much like athlete's foot, infiltrates the tissue and eats through it. Fighting off the disease uses up a lot of energy, causing the bat to prematurely use up all of its fat reserves, essentially starving the bat before the winter ends.

Since bats cuddle up so close to each other during hibernation, the disease spreads like wildfire. Entire colonies have been wiped out by the disease, with the typical mortality rate being documented at 80-97%. While no cure has been found, scientists are working around the clock to combat the disease.



If you look closely at this picture, you might notice that the bones in a bat's wing look similar to the bones in your arm and hand—only a lot more stretched out!

## How Can I Help Tennessee Bats?

Install a bat house! Bats don't always live in caves. Most bats spend summers in trees, under bridges or in old buildings. As forests are cleared, it's getting harder for bats to find a place to raise their kids. With a bat house, not only will you be helping animals in need, but they'll help you by keeping your yard insect-free! A win-win situation any way you look at it. Visit your local hardware store to buy one, or check out [NWF.org](http://NWF.org) for information on how to build your very own bat house from scratch!



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### Sources

The Tennessee Bat Working Group

National Wildlife Federation

"How Stuff Works" Podcast, Episode 125:  
"How Bats Work"

